

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claim 20 and cancel claims 27-33 without disclaimer or prejudice.

1-19. Cancelled

20. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a shell coating on a mass of thermally sensitive confectionery centers, comprising the steps of:

- (a) placing the mass of thermally sensitive confectionery centers in a coating vessel;
- (b) intermixing the mass of thermally sensitive centers;
- (c) dispensing a coating solution onto the mass of thermally sensitive centers;
- (d) directly measuring the temperature of a surface of the coated thermally sensitive centers of the mass using a temperature sensor while drying the coated thermally sensitive centers;
- (e) drying the coated thermally sensitive centers by passing a current of drying gas through the coating vessel, and adjusting the temperature of the drying gas in response to the temperature measurement of step (d) to maintain the temperature of the surface of the coated thermally sensitive centers at a predetermined temperature; and
- (f) repeating steps (c) through (e) a predetermined number of times to produce a finished product,

wherein the temperature of the drying gas is a temperature that is sufficient to maintain the temperature of the surface of the coated

thermally sensitive centers at a temperature below the melting point of the centers.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, further comprising directly measuring the moisture content of the surface of the coated thermally sensitive centers of the mass using a moisture sensor and drying the coated centers until the surface moisture of the coated thermally sensitive centers is about 0% to about 30% water, by weight.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, comprising drying the coated centers until the surface moisture of the coated thermally sensitive centers is about 0% to about 10% water, by weight.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the thermally sensitive centers comprise a chocolate, a chocolate-containing composition, a cocoa-containing composition, a nut-flavored composition or a nut-containing composition.

24. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the coating solution is dispensed onto the mass of thermally sensitive centers while passing the current of drying gas through the coating vessel until the centers have attained a pre-determined weight.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the temperature of the drying gas is adjusted to temperatures between 20°C and 60°C.

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the drying gas has a moisture content maintained to have a dew point of 0°C to -15°C.

27-33 Cancelled

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, further comprising measuring the moisture content of the surface of the coated thermally sensitive centers of the mass using a moisture sensor.

35. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, comprising drying the coated thermally sensitive centers until the surface moisture of the coated centers is about 0% to about 10% water, by weight.

36. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, comprising drying the coated thermally sensitive centers until the surface moisture of the coated centers is about 0% to about 10% water, by weight.